

Messrs. Priestley and Russell.

YOU have both ventured a letter each in the public papers on the late dreadful riots, which have been committed in the Town of Birmingham, in order, I suppose, to excite commiseration for your situations, and to divert the public eye from yourselves to others, as the supposed cause of all those riots.—The minds of men are by this time cooled a little—and in answer to your artful and wicked insinuations, I hope to prove to every dispassionate person in the kingdom, that you yourselves may be considered as the real cause of that mob, and those riots you so much complain of.

Your letter, good Doctor, opens with an appeal to the *uniform experience the town has had of your peaceful behaviour, and attention to the quiet studies of your profession, for the eleven years you have resided near it.*—Now it is notorious—that the town of Birmingham had enjoyed an uninterrupted scene of peace and happiness for more than fifty years: Every thing in it moved in perfect harmony and order, till you, like a noxious planet, approached towards it. Religious differences and divisions were few (from your own writings I can prove this) till you came to sow the seeds of dissension by your pestilential publications, and unfounded doctrines from the pulpit.—You have endeavoured to unhinge the minds of the people—to alienate their affections from government—from religious observances on the established church—from every attention and respect due to their appointed teachers and pastors—and to perplex their minds with subtle disputes on religious doctrines, in which your own creed, by your own confession, is not yet fixed.—These practices, you are conscious, have been your daily business—and yet you have the impudence to appeal to the uniform experience of the town of Birmingham for your *peaceful* behaviour, and attention to your *quiet* studies.—In proof of what has been said—I appeal to your own writings—to your unwearied attacks upon governors and our present established government—to your illiberal abuse of the whole body of the clergy—and I appeal not only to the town of Birmingham in general—but even to the more moderate dissenters there, who, I understand at present impute all their sufferings to the violence and impetuosity of your nature, and the well-known restless spirit of your *busy* Friend.

To say, that the mob was misled, and their bigotry excited to the highest pitch, by hearing the dissenters railed at, and that the discourses of the clergy have led the people to think, that in *destroying you*, they did *God service*, is a bold and false assertion, without the least proof or truth.—And as you, Doctor, are, I understand, of so weak and irritable a nature, that the least contradiction agitates your whole frame, let me recommend it to you for your own peace of mind, to consult a little the truth of facts, before you make another attempt like this to impose upon the world—impose you cannot on the inhabitants of Birmingham, who know the *reverse* of what you assert to be the direct fact.—Considering the most violent and outrageous attacks you have made of late upon all establishments, and your eternal workings to undermine the church—a clergyman resident in the town of Birmingham, would be wanting surely in the duties of his office, and in his regard to that church he is bound to serve, who suffered your unprovoked insolence and calumnies to pass unnoticed and unmarked—but the truth is, I believe, Doctor, that the clergy of Birmingham are a mild and peaceable set of men, who regard more the common duties of their office than your virulent abuse, which cannot move their anger, however it might excite

excite their pity or contempt.—The people, you say, have been misled—but pray, *Who* has endeavoured to mislead them?—*Who*? but Dr. Priestley—by his constant railing at the present government both in church and state.—*Who* has constantly taught that the *destruction of us* is a *right object*, and that the *means* could not be wrong, even the means of a *Gun-powder plot*?—The world knows it is Dr. Priestley.—*Who*, by his writings and discourses has endeavoured to excite and inflame the passions of the people, and prepare them for every species of outrage—but Dr. Priestley?—*Who* has led the people to think, that in destroying the established church, they *did God* and their country the most substantial service?—*Who*? but Dr. Priestley—in his Familiar Letters, his Answer and Preface to Mr. Burn, &c. &c.—*You had digged a pit, and are fallen into the midst of it yourself—in the net which you bid privately, is your foot taken—you are trapped in the work of your own hands—and the mischief you had imagined against another, is fallen upon your own head.*—You must have understood very well, and felt the power of these wicked arts, to have been enabled with so much readiness to have attributed them to others.

Whether your conscience tells you that you deserved death, I know not—but by your words 'tis clear, that the misfortune of losing you, though of such service *in your own opinion*, to society in general, would have been nothing in comparison of the many outrages committed on private property and effects.—And we entirely agree with you, Doctor.

The sufferings of a good man every one partakes of, and laments—and those of Mr. Taylor and Mr. Ryland in particular, and of others whose effects fell a sacrifice to the violences of the mob, are very generally lamented—but the sufferings of those who instigate evil that over-reaches themselves, carry too much the appearance of *deserved punishment* to excite commiseration.—You, Sir, in most *modest language*, have described your sufferings to be very great in the destruction of the first and most useful apparatus of philosophical instruments that any man in this or any other country was ever possessed of.—Our feelings for you on this head would have been greater, had this description come from some other hand than *your own*.—In the loss of your *manuscripts*, there are some who think, that the misfortune of losing one part, is somewhat compensated in the destruction of another.

You deny any concern in the *Hand Bill*. No one, that I hear, has *proved* it upon you. Some, however, *did think*, it bore a striking *familiarity* to your *usual language*.

The world only smiles at your palliation of yourself, in saying, that you did not attend the celebration of the French Revolution. Being well acquainted with your principles, we are not at a loss for your meaning.

No one is surprised at your revengeful introduction of Mr. Madam's name. As he told you that you smarted under the lash of a *superior hand*, so we think you at present smart under the lash of *his telling you so*.

You are always very kind in your advice to us, how *we* are to direct our conduct, and what modes we are to take to serve our cause. We thank even an *enemy* for his advice—*when it is well meant*.

To whom now, Sir, in this letter of yours, have you been addressing yourself? To the inhabitants, I think, of the town of Birmingham.—And are you not ashamed to endeavour thus to asperse their characters in the world, when it is so true, that every nerve was exerted both by the laity and clergy of the established church (to their honour be it mentioned) even at the hazard of their own lives and properties, to save and protect the property of the dissenters in the late riots. Have you no gratitude in you? If you have not—the *body of the dissenters* have—and their public thanks to the laity and clergy of the established church in the Birmingham paper of July the 25th, gave the directest contradiction to the whole catalogue of your most wicked insinuations and unfounded assertions.

You

You are a strong Revolutionist we all know.—For God's sake, for ours, and *your own*, since you reverence so much the Revolution system, get off for France. The people of Birmingham never wish more to see or hear of you, and England, I am sure, will be very glad to get rid of so troublesome a character. Your letter needed not the signature of *Priestley*. Every one acquainted with the shameful, unqualified, and undignified manner in which you write in general, must know the hand from whence this came. The same mode of shuffling, misinterpreting, shifting, twisting, and uniform system of false statements, pervade every publication that comes from you.—Every man may now judge what reliance is to be placed on your *scripture* interpretations, from the specimen you have given us of your powers of perversion in the letter now before us.—*Quocunque modo* is your motto, when you have a point to carry.

To you, Mr. RUSSELL, my address will be very short. You are not of consequence sufficient to attract the public notice : And you are but the *Bell-mouth* of Dr. Priestley. He probably composed what you and Mr. Keir have set your names to.—You have been pleased, however, to vouch for *that* in the most solemn manner, which I affirm to be a direct *falsehood*.—Before you ventured to publish *toasts* given at your meeting, it was your business to be acquainted (and indeed you *must have been acquainted*, Mr. Russell) with those toasts in their full extent. Otherwise you aver *that*, which you cannot know to be *true*. Now Mr. Keir's own publication of the toasts since your letter appeared, proves you to have been guilty of a gross falsehood. The fact is, you were ashamed (as you ought to be) of *some* of your toasts—and you published, therefore, only a *part*, and that a *mutilated* one—hoping to escape detection. Unluckily for you and your party, we have as correct a copy as your *worthy* chairman, Mr. Keir—and I am told, that even *He* has kept back some, and varied others—but this I affirm not on my own knowledge.—His letter is the most *jesuitical* comment on a *Presbyterian* performance, I ever saw.

You are brought to shame (though I give you too much credit, by supposing you possessed of any) for *one* falsehood.

Your representation of your conference with Mr. Dadley, the Master of the Hotel, carries with it *another* falsehood.

You would represent yourself and friends on this occasion as taking every precaution, and lay the blame in part on poor Mr. Dadley, who is a very innocent and good kind of man, for assuring you, there would be no danger of any tumult, *if you took care only to break up early*.

Come forward, now, Sir—and deny the charge against you, if you can.—You were the *very* man, who declared in the most peremptory language, on a representation of the danger likely to ensue—that *there should be a dinner*—that if you sat down *alone*, you would insist on it—and would be responsible for all consequences.

I leave you, now, Sir, to make the best of these charges of *falsehood* against you—and to convince the world, if you can, that you and your party may not be considered as the *real* authors—by your obstinate perseverance in your meeting, against the sober cautions and general alarm of the whole town of Birmingham—of all those *dreadful riots* that ensued.

I am, MESSIEURS,

not

The Button Burnisher—but a Lover of Truth.

John now believes.—Someone who is poor must, when you have a point to carry, let your fellow-interested ones, from the specimen you have given us of your powers of power, as in the case of every prohibition that comes from you.—Every man may now judge what reliance is to be placed on the mode of thinking, notwithstanding, twisting, and unknown system of false statements, for which he is obliged to answer in which you were in power, and now the hand is out against the cause. The fact is, that the people of America have never will more, which the Revolution has set off for France. The people of America have never will more, which the Revolution has set off for France. The people of America have never will more, which the Revolution has set off for France.

—His letter is the most valuable comment on a professional performance I ever saw. I tell, that even he has kept back some, and varied others—but this I affirm not on my own knowledge—luckily for you and your party, we have secured a copy as your worthy chairman, Mr. Kay—and I am and you gratified, therefore, only a part, and that a valuable one—hoping to elicit discussion. Un- guilty of a gross falsehood. The fact is, you were ashamed (as you ought to be) of some of your faults—now Mr. Kay's own publication of the faults since your letter appeared, proves you to have been un- satisfied) with those faults in their full extent. Otherwise you never knew, which you cannot know to be at your meeting, it was your business to be acquainted (and indeed you may have been acquainted, Mr. Kay, in some manner, which I admit to be a direct falsehood.—Before you ventured to publish your given you and Mr. Kay have let your names to.—You have been pleased, however, to vouch for that in the and the public notice. And on me put the Balaamite of Dr. Priestley. He probably concluded what To your Mr. Kay's letter, my address will be very short. You are not of consequence sufficient to

Yours brought to name (though I give you too much credit, by supposing you possessed of any) for
our ill blood.

Your representation of your conference with Mr. Dabney, the Master of the Hotel, carries with it
 your faithfulness.

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that day is a dinner—that if you eat down alone, you would still eat—and would be responsible for
 as declared in the most derogatory language, on a representation of the danger likely to ensue—that
 come to you 24—will only say the same. If you come—You will be

I leave you, now, Sir, to make the best of these charges of falsehood against you—and to convince the world, if you can, that you and your party may not be considered as the real authors—by your opposition to the meeting, against the labor cause, and general attack of the whole town of Birmingham—of all those miserable lies that entered.

1917, MESSIAH, 25

The Butler Barn—on a lower of Flats.